Numb. DXI.

The SPECTATOR.

Quis non invenit turbâ quod amaret in illâ? Ov.

Thursday, October 16. 1712.

Dear Spec.

'FINDING that my last Letter took, I 'do intend to continue my Epistolary 'Correspondence with thee, on those 'dear confounded Creatures *Women*. Thou knowest, all the little Learning I am Master of is upon that Subject: I never looked in a Book, but for their sakes. I have lately met with two pure Stories for a *Spectator*, which I am sure will please mightily, if they past through thy Hands. The first of them I found by chance in an *English* Book called *Herodotus*, that lay in my Friend *Dapperwit*'s Window, as I visited him one Morning. It luckily opened in the Place where I met with the following Account. He tells us that it was the Manner among the *Persians* to have several *Fairs* in the Kingdom, at which all the young unmarried Women were annually exposed to Sale. The Men who wanted Wives came hither to provide themselves: Every Woman was given to the highest Bidder, and the Mony which she fetched laid aside for the Publick Use, to be employed as thou shalt hear by and by. By this Means the richest People had the Choice of the Market, and culled out all the most extraordinary Beauties. As soon as the Fair was thus picked, the Refuse was to be distributed among the Poor, and among those who could not go to the Price of a *Beauty*. Several of these married the *Agreeables*, without paying a Farthing for them, unless somebody chanced to think it worth his while to bid for them, in which Case the best Bidder was always the Purchaser. But now you must know, Spec. it happened in *Persia*, as it does in our own Country, that there were so many *ugly Women* as *Beauties* or *Agreeables*, 'so that by Consequence, after the Magistrates had 'put off a great many, there were still a great many that stuck upon their Hands. In order therefore to clear the Market, the Mony which the 'Beauties had sold for was disposed of among the 'Ugly; so that a poor Man, who could not afford 'to have a Beauty for his Wife, was forced to 'take up with a Fortune; the greatest Portion 'being always given to the most Deformed. To 'this the Author adds, that every poor Man was 'forced to live kindly with his Wife, or, in Case 'he repented of his Bargain, to return her Portion 'with her to the next publick Sale.

'What I would recommend to thee on this Occasion is, to establish such an Imaginary Fair in '*Great Britain*; Thou couldst make it very pleasant, 'by matching Women of Quality with Coblers and 'Carmen, or describing Titles and Garters leading off in great Ceremony Shopkeepers and Farmers 'Daughters. Tho' to tell thee the Truth, I am confoundedly afraid that as the Love of Mony prevails in our Iland more than it did in *Persia*, 'we should find that some of our greatest Men 'would chuse out the Portions, and rival one another for the richest Piece of Deformity; and that 'on the contrary, the Toasts and Belles would be 'bought up by extravagant Heirs, Gamesters, 'and Spendthrifts. Thou couldst make very 'pretty Reflections upon this Occasion in Honour 'of the *Persian* Politicks, who took care, by such 'Marriages, to beautifie the upper part of the Species, and to make the greatest Persons in the Government the most Graceful. But this I shall 'leave to thy judicious Pen.

Price Two-pence.

'I have another Story to tell thee, which I likewiſe met with in a Book. It ſeems the General of the *Tartars*, after having laid Siege to a ſtrong Town in *China*, and taken it by Storm, would ſet to Sale all the Women that were found in it. Accordingly he put each of them into a Sack, and after having thoroughly conſidered the Value of the Woman who was incloſed, marked the Price that was demanded for her upon the Sack. There were a great Confluence of Chapmen, that reſorted from every Part, with a deſign to purchaſe, which they were to do *unſight unſeen*. The Book mentions a Merchant in particular, who obſerving one of the Sacks to be marked pretty high, bargained for it, and carried it off with him to his Houſe. As he was reſting with it upon an half-way Bridge, he was reſolved to take a ſurvey of his Purchaſe: Upon opening the Sack, a little old Woman popped her Head out of it, at which the Adventurer was in ſo great a Rage, that he was going to ſhoot her out into the River. The old Lady however begged him firſt of all to hear her Story, by which he learned that ſhe was Siſter to a great *Mandarin*, who would infallibly make the Fortune of his Brother-in Law, as ſoon as he ſhould know to whoſe Lot ſhe fell. Upon which the Merchant again tied her up in his Sack, and carryed her to his Houſe, where ſhe proved an excellent Wife, and procured him all the Riches from her Brother that ſhe had promiſed him.

'I fancy, if I was diſpoſed to dream a ſecond time, I could make a tolerable Viſion upon this Plan. I would ſuppoſe all the unmarried Women in *London* and *Weſtminſter* brought to Market in Sacks, with their reſpective Prices on each Sack. The firſt Sack that is ſold is marked with five thouſand Pound: Upon the opening of it, I find it filled with an admirable Houſewife, of an ingreeable Countenance: The Purchaſer, upon hearing her good Qualities, pays down her Price very cheerfully. The ſecond I would open ſhould be a five-hundred Pound Sack: The Lady in it, to our Surpriſe, has the Face and Perſon of a Toaſt: As we are wondering how ſhe came to be ſet at ſo low Price, we hear that ſhe would have been valued at ten thouſand Pound, but that the Publick had made thoſe Abatements for her being a Scold. I would afterwards find ſome beautiful, modeſt and diſcreet Woman, that ſhould be the Top of the Market; and perhaps diſcover half a dozen Romps tyed up together in the ſame Sack, at one hundred Pound an Head. The Prude and the Coquet ſhould be valued at the ſame Price, tho' the firſt ſhould go off the better of the two. If fancy thou wouldſt like ſuch a Viſion, had I Time to finiſh it; becauſe, to talk in thy own way, there is a Moral in it. Whatever thou may'ſt think of it, prithee do not make any of thy queer Apologies for this Letter, as thou didſt for my laſt. The Women love a gay lively Fellow, and are never angry at the Raillories of one who is their known Admirer. I am always bitter upon them, but well with them.

Thine,

HONEYCOMB.

Advertiſements and Letters continue to be taken in by S. Buckley *at the* Dolphin *in* Little-Britain, J. Tonſon *at* Shakeſpear's-*Head in the* Strand, C. Lillie *at the Corner of* Beauford Buildings, *and* A. Baldwin *in* Warwick-Lane.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

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